Bagby

Florencia Jasso worked the Port of Texas City for the Maceos collecting vig
A nice guy at heart, he got the job because he was so goddamned big
And spoke Spanish and English and knew how to grumble *romper la pierna*
So the vatos on the docks would say *usted lo conseguirá ayer-na!*

April 16, 1947 he was sitting at the market with his teenage daughter
Warning her about dark-eyed boys and to stay away from the water
The Grandcamp started smoking and bells rang up and down the pier
The daughter caught up in the excitement tugged her daddy's hand and pulled him near

To the dock that was swarming with police and firemen
All the uniforms around made Florencia think again
About being there with his baby girl upon whom he devoted
And he turned her away just before two thousand pounds of ammonium nitrate exploded

Florencia lost a leg, his face melted like wax and one eye would never see again
He lost all his hair, most his skin, his voice; but none of that caused him pain
Like seeing his daughter in a tent full of the dead and suffering
His lovely baby girl Denise laying there with her arm missing

The Maceos were a lot of things but ungrateful was not one
Plus a monster on the payroll might be a lot of fun
They moved Florencia to Galveston as soon as he could travel
And set him up with a wooden leg shaped like a judge's gavel

They called him "His Honor" and he became the message they would send
When they needed to strike fear or if there were a life that they wanted to end
Florencia didn't mind, it was a job he could do without uttering a peep

After all; monster is as monster does, and he knew just how life was cheap

And the Maceos took good care of his lovely baby girl
They gave her the best doctors and a necklace made of pearls
She wore when she sang before the adoring audience of the Balinese Room
Even though the sleeve of her gown was empty as Jesus' tomb

In 1951 Sinatra couldn't get arrested in New York City
People saw him with Ava on his arm and for Nancy felt pity
He blew out his vocal chords singing drunk at the 'Cabana
And the only place he could find work was west of Louisiana

You can't fake it on stage for the wiseguys at Three Deuces
But doing "My Way" like a barking seal was good enough for Texas
A friend of a friend of a friend put Frank next to Sam Maceo
And he got a steady gig singing at the Balinese's Saturday night show

Frank was made strong by the ocean air from the Gulf Coast
Soon he was bringing down the roof by swinging "Yellow Rose"
The one thing he missed was having Ava Garner on his arm
But she hated Texas weather and said the people had no charm

Ava refused to even visit; "Get well soon, or else" she told him
Though she was the love of his life, Frank bristled at the ultimatum
His well-trained eyes started roving and he was soon made aware
How the humidity did wonders for a woman's skin and long black hair

Like that which flowed down the curvy back of Denise Jasso who he'd seen
Around the island where she was treated like royalty; a child queen
That she was beautiful and graceful Frank could not deny
But none of the local men hit on her and he wondered why

Prejudice against the handicapped or just felt sorry for the poor thing?
Whatever the case, nobody seemed to want a go at the bird with one wing
Frank knew the difference between one man's trash and another's treasure
He watched her performances and afterwards made it his pleasure

To have a drink with her on the pier or take a walk on the sand
Careful to choose the right side so he could hold her hand
And fill her ears with smooth talk of her loveliness and talented voice
How she could become his protégé, if she made the right choice

Storm clouds raged over the ocean the day they consummated their union
And the wind blew hot as Ava Gardner's plane touched down in Houston
Maybe it was a coincidence or maybe it was loose lips
But she wanted to see her lover-man so she made the surprise trip

She charmed the key from the clerk and silently opened the lock
Stood in the doorway as lightning flashed and thunder shocked
The two people in bed who jumped up in a panic
Lightning lit the room again and Frank knew he had had it

Denise had seen hell the day Texas City exploded
But that hadn't prepared her for when Ava unloaded
The look of hatred and scorn that burned in her green eyes

Frank started talking, but the words just buzzed like flies

Around the room as Ava took one step, then two
And raised her hand towards Denise who
Used the only arm she had to protect herself from the abuse
Which cause her slip to fall away as the strap came loose

That's when Ava saw the deformity and her expression changed
She lowered her hand and her face became strange
The she did something worse than tearing Denise in half
Ava Gardner tilted her head back and laughed and laughed

A couple hours later Sinatra was at the Turf Athletic Club
Sam and Rose were upset and Frank worried they might rub
Out his life over this ridiculous and silly affair
He leaned forward to plead his case when he became aware

Of a presence behind him; a footstep then a scrape
Sinatra turned to see who it was and his mouth did gape
At the sight of the monster that had entered the room
The creature rushed him and Frank knew he was doomed

"His Honor, no!" Rosario the enforcer did shout
He grabbed a hold of the monster and they wrestled about
In the commotion Frank tumbled when his chair was upturned
His head hit the floor and he was startled to learn

That this beast had no leg, only a hammer of wood
And it was coming at his face and that was not good
For a moment Frank feared that it was a safe bet
His head would be used for a game of croquet

A gunshot was fired and the giant slumped
Into the arms of Rose Maceo who then grumped
"You should not have done that," he said to his brother
"For this washed up has-been who thinks he's a lover"

Sam set the smoking pistol on the desk and let out a sigh
He squatted down next to Frank and looked him in the eye
He held his thumb and forefinger about one inch apart
"Good thing you can sing cause you ain't goddamned smart"

Frank and Ava left Texas and never looked back
Then Sinatra made Eternity and established the fact
That ol' Blue Eyes was a man destined to be great
Not just a shallow grave in the Lone Star State

But Summer nights in New York can be hot as hell
And lying in bed, Sinatra remembered well
Horrible nightmares that made his cool unravel
A face made of wax and the bang of a gavel